

# PRESS RELEASE

## House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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### OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP HEARING ON FY 2003 AIR FORCE BUDGET

Today, the committee concludes its review of the fiscal year 2003 budget requests of the military services with the Air Force.

As our witnesses, I am pleased to welcome Secretary of the Air Force James Roche and Chief of Staff General John Jumper to testify on the Air Force's budget request.

As we all are keenly aware, the Air Force has played a significant role in the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Within only a few months time, the Air Force demonstrated the value of air power as a force multiplier for ground forces to fundamentally change the combat equation. Moreover, the Air Force continues to keep watch over our skies here in the United States to dissuade and preclude another September 11 from happening again.

Last week, the Commander-in-Chief of Central Command General Tommy Franks told the committee that all of the delivery and most resupply of personnel and equipment in Afghanistan has been accomplished by air. In addition to the enormity of the humanitarian relief operations, the Air Force efforts in Afghanistan have been remarkable.

However, all this comes at a cost. The committee is well aware of the toll that sustained operations have upon pilots, air crews, their families, and aircraft and equipment. While the budget request for the Air Force in fiscal year 2003 is \$87 billion - an increase of nearly \$7 billion over fiscal year 2002 - the unfunded priority list is almost \$4 billion. Clearly, hard choices are still required even in this new era of increased defense spending.

The Air Force program for the coming fiscal year has its shortcomings especially in the area of facilities modernization. But leadership demands tough decisions and I commend Secretary Roche and General Jumper for delivering a budget that ensures that the Air Force will remain ready and able to defend the

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nation, anytime and anywhere.

However, I think it is fair to say that the Armed Services Committee has over the years insisted that our nation's policy in this area properly account for the unique and increasingly challenging national security needs of the United States. While this cannot be an absolute standard, it certainly should be the overriding one.

To help us understand this broader policy context and how this specific legislation addresses these concerns, we have before us a cross-section of witnesses representing various perspectives on the issue.

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